Book review: A constructive discourse

The book portrays the changing scenario of peoples☐ expectations from mainstream media which has been corporatized and is responsible for the commodification of news. C S H N MURTHY reviews `Indian Media in a Globalised World☐

Posted Friday, May 06 14:27:59, 2011

INDIAN MEDIA IN A GLOBALISED WORLD:
By Maya Ranganathan and Usha M Rodrigues
Pages 275 (Hard bound)
Year of Publication 2010
Sage Publications, New Delhi
Rs.550

'Indian Media in a Globalized World' offers a refreshingly academic look at the expanding media. The book, written by Maya Ranganathan and Usha Rodrigues, explores the pressures the media was subjected to as it faced 'globalization' and 'glocalization'. Parts of the book have already been published in peer reviewed international journals. However as a compendium, the book touches all the laterals of the Indian media post globalization.

The first chapter, 'Glocalisation of Indian Television', deals with the establishment of television in private sector and how foreign television broadcasters - some independently (eg. Star TV) and some with the local industrial houses (eg.CNN-IBN) – have established an amazing number of channels at national and regional levels. Usha describes, citing a number of theories concerning 'cultural imperialism' and 'Globalisation', how local channels have come to engage with 'local' and 'global paradigms' (such as reality shows) of programs development. The chapter grounds Indian television in the appropriate theoretical discourse, especially the process within which it has been evolving over 15 years since globalisation.

In 'Nationalism as a marketing tool by MNC advertisements', Maya Ranganathan articulates the strategies used by multinationals who have adopted local cultures and national identities for advertising. She cites a number of examples of MNC advertisements using local dresses, language and traditions as well as national symbols like the tricolour. Not all have followed this trend with *AXE Temptations*, *AXE Fragrance, Head and Shoulders, Clinic All Clear* and *Close up* continuing to use foreign models.

One chapter captures the strategies print media have used since Independence to sustain circulation. The chapter sites works of Thakurta (2009), Mudgal (2009), Mitra (2009) and Ninan (2007), besides Robin Jeffery (2000). The chapter on FM radio presents the growth of FM Radio in its historical perspective but does not assess the FM phenomenon or explore if it had proved to be a substitute to All India Radio.

In the chapter on 'The Pan-Tamil Rhetoric in Regional Media' Maya states that there were occasions when English and Tamil media had shown extreme

divergence. Tamil politics in the post Annadurai period had dramatically changed with the power drifting towards regional political identities such as DMK and AIDMK. She shows how Tamil media was influenced by the ideologues of all these political hues besides LTTE.

In 'Citizen Journalism and the Public Sphere in India' Usha portrays the changing scenario of peoples' expectations and frustration with main stream media which is catering to corporatization and commodification of news. She sees the emergence of 'Citizen Journalism' as a revival of public sphere of Habermas, the first proponent of the term 'public sphere'.

'The Naga Nation on the Net' studies the establishing of web portals for fighting the cause of an independent nation for Nagas. The chapter concludes on an optimistic note hoping that the fullest potential of this alternative media will be realized. The authors, however, would do well to bear in mind the fact that alternative media has – as in the case of LTTE's fight for separate Eelam in Sri Lanka, and the Facebook crusade against Mahmoud Ahmadinezad of Iran – not often yielded positive results.

In one chapter which is a case study of Bollywood film *Swades*' Maya deals with 'nativity', 'natives' in India and 'non-natives of Indian origin' as diaspora returning home and being treated as the 'other'. The author's wonderful analysis in drawing clearly the boundaries between the terms of dominant discourse using the film frames is an asset. But prior to this book, Lalit Joshi has attempted to analyze the frames of *Swades* in his article *'Indian images, Transnational Spaces'* (`Post-Modernism Globalization & the Media' Ed. A.F.Mathew. pp. 174-200. MICA Publications).

The book offers a contrast to what Srividya Ramasubramanian, (Texas A & M University), has done in her work - *A Content Analysis of the Portrayal of Indian in Films produced in the West* (*The Howard Journal of Communications*.16: 243-265, 2005). A comparative approach to the portrayal of Indians within Indian context and the portrayal of Indians within the western context offer a promising complimentary approaches to film framing of what is aptly described by Maya as 'natives' and the 'others'. The chapter 'The Archetypes of Sita, Kaikeyi and Surpanaka Stride the Small screen' frames Indian television serials/stories in Tamil television programs.

In the last section the authors offer a constructive discourse on the future of blogosphere as well as television policy. Today much of the concern of the public is not about *Doordarshan* but about the attitudes of private television broadcasters who neither self-regulate nor accept regulation but indulge in episodes like Nira Radia's lobbying for Tatas for telecom spectrum in which Barkha of NDTV got entangled willy-nilly. A little more referencing in different chapters including many works of the author of this review could have enriched the book in offering a holistic perspective. The books is a must read for media students, scholars, media academics and professionals.

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